

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MEXICO 08598 01 OF 02 030222Z

54

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SUBJECT: MEXICO ON ELECTION EVE

SUMMARY: PRESIDENTIAL AND CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS JULY 4
PROMISE TO BE WELCOME LULL AT EYE OF MEXICO'S POLITICAL
STORM. AFTER MONTHS OF POLITICAL EFFERVESCENCE AMONG LABOR,
CAMPEsinOS, AND (IN WORRIED REACTION) EVEN MMILITARY,
PLUS RECURRENT VIOLENCE FROM URBAN TERRORISTS, ELECTION DAY --
WITH ITS FOREGONE CONCLUSIONS -- HAS AIR OF ENTR'ACTE DIVERSION.
RITUAL ENDORSEMENT OF UNOPPOSED PRI PRESIDENTIAL CANDIADTE
LOPEZ PORTILLO AND MASSIVE PRI CONGRESSIONAL SWEEP ARE TAKEN
FOR GRANTED; BIG QUESTIONS IS WHETHER VOTER INDIFFERENCE AND
ABSTENTION RATE WILL MAR PRI VICTORY CLEBRATIONS. NEXT
WEEK, HOWEVER, POLITICS ARE USUAL, AS ELEMENTS INSIDE AND
OUT OF "REVOLUTIONARY FAMILY" RESUME INTENSE JOCKEYING FOR
POSITIONS AND INFLUENCE IN LOPEZ PORTILLO HOUSEHOLD. END
SUMMARY.

1. TROPICAL STORM "BONNIE" HAS SETTLED OVER MOST OF MEXICO
IN PAST FEW DAYS, CLOUDING SKIES, AND STILLING AIR.
MEXICO CITY, AT EYE OF STORM, SEEMS MOST
SOMBRE AND STILL OF ALL -- CONDITION WHICH SEEMS
ALTOGETHER SUITABLE TO POLITICAL CLIMATE HERE ON ELECTION
EVE.

2. IN REVERSE FASHION TO WHAT ONE MIGHT EXPECT ELSEWHERE,
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PAGE 02 MEXICO 08598 01 OF 02 030222Z

POLITICS HERE GRIND TO HALT WITH ARRIVAL OF ELECTIONS.

POLITICAL TURMOIL OF RECENT MONTHS HAS SUBSIDED, WHILE ALL PAUSE FOR PLAYING OUT OF ELECTORAL RITUAL WHOSE OUTCOME IS AS CERTAIN AS GREEK DRAMA. BUT POLITICIANS FROM PRI PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE JOSE LOPEX PORTILLO ON DOWN ARE RECHARGING THEIR BATTERIES FOR NEXT ROUND OF POLITICAL INFIGHTING WHICH BEGINS AS SOON AS POLLS ARE CLOSED AND WILL DETERMINE, FOR MORE THAN ELECTIONS THEMSELVES, SHAPE AND CHARACTER OF NEXT ADMINISTRATION.

3. GOM HAS BEEN QUIETLY ANXIOUS THAT ATTEMPTS WOULD BE MADE BY SOMEONE -- MOST LIKELY 23RD OF SEPTEMBER TYP URBAN TERRORISTS -- TO DISRUPT ELECTORAL PROCESS. MILITARY GUARDS ARE ALREADY POSTED HEAVILY AROUND ELECTORAL COMMISSION OFFICES, AND BOTH POLICE AND MILITARY WILL BE ON ALERT IN FORCE OVER ELECTION WEEK END. ALTHOUGH FEARS MAY BE JUSTIFIED AND SECURITY FORCES ARE BRACED FOR INCIDENTS, WE SEE SCANT EVIDENCE OF ANY TROUBLE BREWING.

MOST RECENT VIOLENCE, THAT INVOLVING SHOOTINGS OF SEVERAL LOCAL POLICE OFFICERS, OCCURRED ALMOST MONTH AGO AND WAS FOLLOWED BY NUMEROUS ARRESTS OF SUSPECTED TERRORISTS.

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4. THERE HAS IN FACT BEEN DISCERNIBLE DECLINE IN POLITICAL EFFERVESCENCE IN RECENT WEEKS, ALTHOUGH SIGNS OF SEVERELY STRAINED RELATIONS WITHIN THE "REVOLUTIONARY FAMILY" PERSIST:

--SUPPOSEDLY IRON-HANDED CONTROL OF FIDEL VELAZQUEZ OVER ORGANIZED LABOR SHOWED SIGNS OF WEAKNESS AS TELEPHONE WORKERS' WILDCAT STRIKE SUCCEEDED IN TOSSING OUT VELEZQUEZ CRONY WHO HEADED UNION. MAVERICK LEFTIST FACTION FOR MAJOR (CTM) ELECTRICAL WORKERS' UNION IS THREATENING TO FOLLOW THIS NOVEL PRECEDENT WITH ITS OWN WILDCAT STRIKE JULY 16. VELAZQUEZ, ANNOYED AND PERHAPS ALARMED AT GETTING LESS THAN FULL SUPPORT FROM GOM, THREATENED JUNE 30 TO PUSH FOR SEMI-ANNUAL WAGE INCREASES. MESSAGE SEEMED TO BE -- "DON'T TAKE US FOR GRANTED." NEVERTHELESS, ORGANIZED LABOR REMAINS PRINCIPAL PILLAR OF REGIME AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO MARCH TO POLLS TO ENSURE ELECTION OF PRI CONGRESSIONAL CANDIDATES.

-- CAMPESINOS CONTINUE TO POSE MAJOR POLITICAL AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 MEXICO 08598 01 OF 02 030222Z

IDEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS FOR REGIME. INVADING CAMPESINO GROUPS (WHO MAY OR MAY NOT BE ACTING AT BEHEST OF LET-WING PRI POLITICIANS AND SELF-INTERESTED GOM OFFICIALS) CONTINUE TO OCCUPY FARM LANDS ILLEGALLY ALL ACROSS MEXICO. MOREOVER, QUESTION OF HOW TO REALIZE LAND REDISTRIBUTION GOALS OF MEXICAN AGRARIAN REFORM AND THUS SATISFY ASPIRATIONS OF THESE CAMPESINOS -- WITHOUT ALSO SACRIFICING AGRICULTURAL OUT-PUT -- REMAINS FUNDAMENTAL

THEORETICAL DILIMMA ROR PRI CAMPAIGNERES. HOWEVER,
NO MAJOR CLASHES HAVE OCCURRED IN CAMPOT IN RECENT
WEEKS, INsofar AS WE ARE AWARE, TO SERIOUSLY UPSET
ELECTORAL CLIMATE.

-- THE MEXICAN ARMY, WE ARE TOLD, REMAINS UNEASY ABOUT
LARGER TREND OF AFFAIRS IN COUNTRY, POTENTIAL
AHEAD FOR SERIOUS CLASHES BETWEEN LAND OWNERS AND CAMPESINOS,
INDUSTRIALISTS AND WORKERS, HAVES AND HAVE NOTS. CLEARLY,
HOWEVER, IT SUNEASINESS HAS NOT RUN AHEAD OF IIS DESIRE
TO AVOID DIRECT INVOLVEMENT. IT IS WATCHFUL, FUT
INCONSPICUOUS, AND APPARENTLY ANXIOUS TO REMAIN THAT WAY.

5. AS ONE MIGHT EXPECT FROM AN UNOPPOSED CANDIDATE, LOPEX
PORTILLO HAS NEVER REALLY "CAUGHT FIRE" DESPITE THOUSANDS OF
MILES OF CAMPAIGN TRAVEL AND AT LEAST 1,500 SPEECHES DURING
THE PAST EIGHT MONTHS. IN ANY CASE, CAMPAIGN'S MAJOR PURPOSE
HAS BEEN TO EDUCATE AND FAMILIARIZE NEXT PRESIDENT WITH
MEXICO'S PRIMARY PROBLEMS, AND ONLY SECONDARILY TO LAY
POLITICAL PLATFORM FOR SOVING THOSE PROBLEMS. LOPEZ
PORTILLO HAS DISTINGUISHED HISSELF, IF ANYTHING, BY HIS
PERSISENT CERTRISM, FEATURE WHICH HAS HAD EFFECT OF
REASSURING BOTH LEFT AND RIGHT THAT HIS ADMINISTRATION WILL
NOT JAR SYSTEM OR LEAD IT IN ANY UNCOMFORTABLE NEW
DIRECTIONS. BOILED DOWN, LOPEZ PORTILLO'S CAMPAIGN
PRESCIRTIONS ARE VIRTUOUS ONES OF GREATER SACRIFICE,
BETTER ORGANIZATION, AND HIGHER PRODUCTIVITY --DIFFICULT
TO FAULT BY RIGHT OR LEFT.

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PAGE 01 MEXICO 08598 02 OF 02 030229Z

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 MEXICO 8598

6. ONLY ON FAR FRINGES ARE THERE SIGNS THAT ANY REAL POLITICAL DISSENT EXISTS. NOVEL FEATURE OF THIS YEAR'S CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN LEGAL POLITICAL ACTIVITY OF MEXICAN COMMUNIST PARTY, WHOSE AGED UN-REGISTERED CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENCY, VALENTIN CAMPA, HAS STAGED INTERESTING IFNOT EXACTLY ALARMING CAMPAIGN. PARTY STREATEGISTS, INCLUDING CAMPA HIMSELF, READILY ADMIT THAT PCM GOAL IS THAT OF "VOTER RECOGNITION" ABOVE ALL -- TO ACCUSTOM VOTERS TO SEEKING HAMMER AND SICKLE ON BALLOTS AND BILLBOARDS WITHOUT FIRIGHTENING THEM. OTHERWISE, PCM TACTICS HAVE BEEN MAINLY LIMITED TO PAINTNG PCM SLOGANS JUST AHEAD OF LOPEZ PORTILLO CARAVAN OR ON TOP OF PRI-LINING POPULAR SOCIALIST PARTY ADVERTISEMENTS.

7 AT OTHER EXTREME, NATIONAL ACTION PARTY (PAN) CANDIDATES FOR SENATORIAL AND CONGRESSIONAL SETAS HAVE SPENT UNUSUAL AMOUNTS OF MONEY IN SOPHISTICATED CAMPAIGN ADVERTISING (ALTHOUGH NOWHERE APPROACHING OUTLAYS BY PRI CANDIDATES THEMSELVES). HAVING FAILED TO AGREE ON NATIONAL CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT, LOCAL PAN ORGANIZATIONS SEEM MORE DETERMINED THAN IN PAST TO INCREASE THEIR SHARE OF SEATS IN NATIONAL CONGRESS, PARTICULARLY IN FEDERAL DISTRICT, WHERE PRI WAS ALARMED BY PAN'S WINNING 43 PERCENT OF 1973 MID-TERM VOTE. THERE ARE STILL REPORTS THAT MINTERREY-BASED FACTION OF PAN IS SUPPORTING WRITE-IN CAMPAIGN FOR ITS FAVORITE-SON PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, PABLO EMILIO MADERO, BUT IT SEEMS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 MEXICO 08598 02 OF 02 030229Z

UNLIKELY TO MAE SIGNIFICANT DENT IN LOPEZ PORTILLO'S MARGIN OF VICTORY.

8. BIG QUESTION -- WHEN YOU GET DOWN TO IT, ALMOST ONLY QUESTIN -- IS ABSTENTION FACTOR. IN 1970 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION SO E 35 PERCENT OF ELIGIBLE VOTERS STAYED AWAY FROM POLLS. ECHEVERRIA WON 85 PERCENT OF BALLOTS CAST BUT ONLY 55 PERCENT OF TOTALPOSSIBLE VOTES.) WITHITS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE RUNNING AGAINST NO REAL OPPONENT THIS TIME, EVEN OF TOKEN SORT, PRI'S BIGGEST CAMPAIGN PUSH HAS BEEN TO PERSUADE VOTERS THAT MAIN ENEMY WAS SIMPLE INDIFFERENCE -- AND THAT IT WAS NOT ONLY THEIR LEGAL OBLIGATIN BUT CIVIC DUTY OF ALL 26 MILLION REGISTERED VOTERS TO AFFIRM PARTICIPATION IN SYSTEM BY VOTING JULY 4. NOT ONLY SOME PAN ELEMENTS BUT ALSO MINOR UNREGISTERED PARTIES HAVE ATTEMPTED TO EXPLOIT POTENTIAL FOR EMBARRASSING LOPEZ PORTILLO BY ENCOURAGING ABSENTTION. PRI REMAINS CLEARLY WORRIED ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF LOW VOTER TURN-OUT -- BUT IT APPEARS UNLIKELY THAT FINAL TALLY WILL IMPLY "REJECTION -BY-ABSTENTION" OF LOPEZ PORTILLO WHICH

SOME OPPONENTS ARE HOPING FOR.

9. MOST INTERESTING SIDELIGHT TO ELECTION CAMPAIGN'S FINAL WEEK IS MAJOR (65 MILLION DOLLARS - US) TAX EVASION SCANDAL RUMORED TO INVOLVE IMPORTANT INDUSTRIAL FIGURES AS WELL AS OFFICIALS IN GOVERNMENT. EVASIONS WERE APPARENTLY ABETTED BY EXTORTION RACKET INVOLVING SENIOR INVESTIGATIVE POLICE OFFICERS - INCLUDING, AT TOP, ONE ALLEGED TO BE CLOSE TO LOPEZ PORTILLO. THIS PLUS FACT THAT, "VICTIM" OF TAX EVASION WAS TREASURY SECRETARIAT WHICH JOSE LOPEZ PORTILLO PREVIOUSLY HEADED. PROVIDE GRIST FOR JUICY GOSSIP MILL SUGGESTING EFFORTS TO HUMILIATE CANDIDATE. HOWEVER, WE HAVE SEEN NOTHING IN SCANDAL SO FAR WHICH WOULD APPEAR TO TARNISH LOPEZ PORTILLO'S OWN PERSONAL IMAGE.

10. MUCH MORE CERTAIN IS THAT, ONCE POLLS ARE CLOSED AND RESULTS TALLIED THIS WEEKEND, POLITICAL CALM WILL END AND JOCKEYING FOR POSITION AND ADVANTAGE WILL RESUME IN EARNEST. WE EXPECT PRESIDENT-ELECT LOPEZ PORTILLO TO BE UNDER HEAVY PRESSURE FROM PRESENT PARTY CHIEFS TO ACCEPT THEIR NOMINATIONS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 MEXICO 08598 02 OF 02 030229Z

FOR INCOMING ADMINISTRATION. DEGREE TO WHICH LOPEZ PORTILLO YIELDS TO THIS "CONTINUISMO" OR, ON THE CONTRARY, SUCCEEDS IN STAMPING HIS OWN PERSONALITY ON NEW ADMINISTRATION AT OUTSET, WILL BE MOST INTERESTING FEATURE OF RENEWED POLITICKING WHICH LIES AHEAD. JOVA

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